

FRENCH LANGUAGE IIB & IIIB 1991

TRANSLATE INTO FRENCH, PLEASE:

In any mixed classroom of eight-year-olds, the girls will be noticeably brighter and more advanced than the boys. Six years later it will no longer be so; most of the girls, with the consent and even encouragement of society, will have succumbed to the impulse to stop thinking and start brooding. The female biological function will have begun to swamp every other potential capacity, the securing of a mate and the production of babies begun to seem the only worthwhile ambition. A tiny percentage of girls (probably ones with parents ambitious for them, and protected by academic schools) manage to go on thinking and learning. After university there is another drop-out, into marriage; and every baby brings with it the temptation to stop thinking. The captive wife is the product not of too much education but of not quite enough. Girls have to learn more than boys: they have to learn to plan, to count the exact cost of fitting in work with motherhood, to counteract the almost inevitable intellectual setbacks it brings. They need to be more persistent, more discriminating, more flexible; to know that there is a time for home cooking and a time to refrain from home cooking. Their most dangerous enemy is neither man nor capitalism but their own unregulated instincts. A useful invention scientists might work on is a pill to control broody feelings.

Claire Tomalin: New Statesman, 13 March 1970